

Christians and Homosexuals

(A Biblical & Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction)

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In today's world there are many questions that revolve around homosexuality and specifically how this sin impacts Christians and Christianity in general. Christians need to have a rational and reasoned approach to understanding and applying what the Bible says about homosexuality to the many different situations and scenarios that they face in life, which relate to homosexual family members, homosexual church members, and unsaved homosexuals. Can a Christian be a homosexual? Can a person really be saved and struggle with homosexuality at the same time? Also, how should Christians treat those (both saved or unsaved) who are involved in this type of sin? How far do we carry Biblical separation from those who practice homosexuality? We need to answer the tough questions in this study based upon God's inerrant truth and clear commands.

Let's bring some basic thoughts together from Scripture on these issues and seek to arrive at Biblical conclusions. In order to do this, we must set aside our feelings, possess a teachable spirit, and let God's Word speak for itself.

1. We know that God chastens those who are His true children.

Hebrews 12:5-8

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards (*illegitimately birthed – not born again spiritually*), and not sons.”

God deeply loves His children and for this reason He chastens them through inward conviction and sometimes through outward circumstance, by allowing adverse circumstances and hardships to invade our lives. God loves His children too much

to leave them go on in a life of sin, under sin's bondage, and not possessing victory and bearing any testimony for God. In fact, some Christians can actually be prematurely taken by God when they continually practice sin without repenting before God and changing their lifestyle (1 Cor. 11:20-21, 29-31). Because of their compromised testimony as a Christian and their complete misrepresentation of Christ, the Lord reserves the right to take a Christian to Heaven because of his flagrant, open, and rebellious sin (James 5:19-20). If a Christian engages in homosexual or lesbian activity, he or she can be sure that God will not allow them to continue in this type of sin without His chastening hand, correction, and chastisement.

It should be noted that there is a difference between struggling with homosexual tendencies versus participating in homosexual activity without possessing any regard for God, inner conviction, and His standard of truth. Christians can struggle with homosexual tendencies if they have been saved out of this type of lifestyle or have been open to it through visual stimulation. However, the Bible is clear that God chastens His people who are involved in these types of egregious sins and when they continue in sin without possessing light and testimony of their Christianity.

How long God allows His children to be overcome with a sin like homosexuality is not a question we can answer directly. God has His own timetable on these matters. But we do read in Scripture of God prematurely taking His children out of this world because of certain heinous sins for which they have soiled the testimony of God (1 Cor. 11:29-31). God sometimes will conclude, "My child, this is enough, and you are coming home to me." And God takes them to their heavenly destiny because of a soiled testimony.

2. Those who practice homosexuality without God's conviction, chastisement, or chastening cannot be saved.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (*meaning 'soft' – the passive role or feminine side in male homosexuality*), nor

abusers of themselves with mankind (*the active role or male side in male homosexuality*), Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Paul was contrasting what the Corinthians did before their conversion with their conduct after conversion (“such were some of you” - 1 Cor. 6:11). He does not mean that Christians are incapable of practicing any of these sins (1 Pet. 4:15-16; Gal. 5:19-21), but that these sins typically characterize unbelievers as a way or pattern of life, who bear no fruit or resemblance to Christ and Christianity in their ongoing lives, and who want nothing to do with God. The fact that they are saved reassures them that there will be a severance from their former lifestyle in overall living and practice (“such were some of you”). It does not mean there will be no failures related to the old way of life (Rom. 7:14), but that the general pattern and bent of one’s life will be evidenced by deliverance and transformation, instead of constant rebellion and fruitlessness (Mark 4:19).

The wonderful truth is that God forgives His children of all homosexuality activity for all time and declares them eternally acquitted and righteous in His presence (“but ye are justified”) based upon His unmerited grace. However, it’s the responsibility of the believer to align His positional forgiveness before God with his daily lifestyle.

Galatians 5:19-21

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like (*such as homosexuality*): of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which *do* (*as an uninterrupted pattern and way of life*) such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but an example of various types of sins which Christians have been delivered from as a result of God’s transforming grace. On the other hand, nonbelievers, the unsaved, have not been delivered from sin’s

power and live in a state of constant rebellion, committing these sins, and giving no evidence of God's life indwelling them.

The verb "do" speaks of practicing these types of sins as a way or pattern of life. In other words, they engage in these practices wholeheartedly without any regard for truth, godliness, repentance, and desire for a new way of life. The meaning of the Bible cannot be changed. If you practice and live in a state of ongoing homosexuality, without repentance and God's chastening, then you cannot be saved and will not experience future glory with Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:32 is placed within the context of unregenerate people:

"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit (continually practice) such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Again, the idea behind "commit such things" refers to a continuous practice of sins without repentance and change of lifestyle. It refers to a person living in open rebellion against God and His ways without possessing any signs of regenerating life. There are various verses in the First Epistle of John that teach the same truth. A person cannot go on living as a homosexual, practicing homosexuality, without eventually repenting and manifesting genuine fruit and transformation in his life. Let's take a few moments and review these verses in John's epistle and specifically apply them to homosexuality.

1 John 2:3-5

"And hereby we do know (*possess confidence*) that we know him (*in a saving and relational way*), **if we keep his commandments** (*as a pattern and way of life*). **He that saith** (*like the unsaved Gnostics*), **I know him** (*possess a saving relationship with God*), **and keepeth not his commandments** (*as a pattern and way of life*), **is a liar** (*by claiming to be something he is not and possessing something he does not have*), **and the truth is not in him** (*the truth about himself, his sin, and relationship with God*). **But whoso keepeth his word** (***the true believer who seeks to obey God***), **in him verily is the love of God perfected** (*reaches its goal in a person's life*): **hereby know we that we are in him**" (*we can have confidence that we possess a saving*

union and relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, when we are obedient and manifesting love in our hearts toward God).

1 John 2:29 says:

“If ye know that he is righteous (*God the Father or God the Son*), **ye know that every one** (*this is true of all believers without exception!*) **that doeth righteousness** (*literally, “the one doing the righteousness” – present active participle denotes habit of life - the prevailing principle of one’s life – not a single action, but a succession of acts which make up the life*) **is born of him”** (*possesses God’s life and nature and righteous living becomes the visible sign of regeneration*).

1 John 3:8 declares:

“He that committeth sin (*continually and habitually practices sin as characteristic of one’s life – as the present-tense participle indicates*) **is of the devil** (*is the devil’s child*); **for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”** (*the sinful works generated by the devil that are used to control our lives*).

1 John 3:9 teaches something similar:

“Whosoever is born of God (*possesses God’s life and nature*) **doth not commit sin** (*literally, “every one having been born of God sin not is doing” – as a pattern or habitual practice or way of life as the present-tense verb indicates*); **for his seed** (*God’s life and nature*) **remaineth in him: and he cannot sin** (*literally – “not he is able to go on sinning” – a life in which sin is not the permanent state*), **because he is born of God.”**

Dr. Lehman Strauss comments:

“What is in view here is not the committal of some act of sin, but the continuance of sin; not the possibility of sin, but the practice of sin. One continuing in sin as a practice of life has not God’s seed in him.”

1 John 3:10

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness (*as a pattern of way of life*) **is not of God** (*not one of God’s children*), **neither he that loveth not his brother.”**

1 John 3:24 adds:

“And he that keepeth his commandments *(as a pattern of living and habitual practice)* **dwelleth in, and he in him** *(possesses a saving union between the believer and Christ – “ye in me, and I in you” - John 14:20).* **And hereby we** *(those who are truly saved and born again)* **know that he (God) abideth in us** *(dwells in our hearts and lives),* **by the Spirit which he hath given us”** *(by the Holy Spirit who lives within us to transform our lives).*

John is very clear about his repeated statements regarding obedience. Obedience is not the WAY of salvation but the CONFIRMATION of one’s salvation and new birth. The very fact that the Holy Spirit is communicating God’s life to us and transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), producing new desires, virtues, goals, and working out obedience in our hearts and lives, “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil.2:13), means that we are God’s children.

1 John 5:18 goes on to say:

“We know that whosoever is born of God *(possessing God’s new life and nature)* **sinneth not** *(literally - “that every one having been born of God not is sinning” as a pattern of life and in a permanent way - as the present-tense verb indicates);* **but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself** *(from an unbroken pattern of sin and way of life),* **and that wicked one (the devil) toucheth him not”** *(does not overcome the believer’s life and keep him bound to sin because of the new nature residing in him).*

Romans 8:9 also declares:

“But ye are not in the flesh *(the sphere of the flesh where unsaved people live and die),* **but in the Spirit** *(the realm of the Holy Spirit who operates within the life of all Christians),* **if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you** *(the Holy Spirit does not indwell a person who does not manifest any change in life).* **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**

It’s clear from all of these verses (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 2:3-5, 29; 3:8-10, 24; Rom. 8:9) that Christians cannot constantly live in a homosexual relationship and commit homosexual acts without God’s chastening hand, without conviction, without confession, without repentance, and without manifesting transformation of living. A Christian might struggle with this type of lust and these types of

relationships for various reasons (prior unsaved lifestyle, raised with homosexual parents, abuse, visual pictures to stimulate the flesh, etc.), but they will not live in constant, open, and ongoing rebellion against God, without genuine repentance, a desire to honor God, and bear some fruit for God's glory.

Of course, no one knows how long God might allow a brother or sister (someone who is truly saved) to live in their sinful condition before chastening them (Heb. 12:6-7), or even prematurely taking them home to Heaven, due to their unrighteous testimony on earth. Again, we do not have any exact answer to God's timetable which may be different in every situation. We must also remember that we do not know what is going on in the hearts of people, how God may be working, and what a person may be experiencing because of God's conviction and chastening hand.

What we do know is what the Bible clearly reveals and teaches. When a person lives year after year, without any conviction, confession, and repentance, and without any inclinations of God's grace working in their lives, then that person cannot be saved and will not go to Heaven in their unsaved state. Why? It's because they have never been born again. We might have a different conclusion about this, but God's word gives us a clear answer regarding people who persist in sinful rebellion against Him, who reject His ways and live in total abandonment to sin and wickedness. They are not born again. This is why these people fail to manifest any real and lasting transformation of living for the Bible says this type of person "becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22) and "whose fruit withereth, without fruit" (Jude 12).

2 Corinthians 13:5 teaches that the revelation of a person's beliefs and behavior of living is a confirming sign of their salvation: "**Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith** (*embracing doctrinal truth - what all Christians believe and embrace*); **prove your own selves** (*give evidence of your salvation*). **Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you** (*that they are rightly related to Christ through faith and experiencing fruitfulness and life transformation through His indwelling presence - Gal. 2:20*), **except ye be reprobates?**" (counterfeits or unsaved people who are rejected and disapproved by God).

When a person is genuinely saved, the Spirit of God moves into the heart of this person and writes or imprints the sensitivity of God's new nature upon their hearts

(2 Cor. 3:3; Ezek. 36:26). From this point forward, they cannot constantly live a fleshly or carnal life without possessing signs of regenerating life (Rom. 8:9). If a person continues to practice homosexuality unrepentantly, promoting it, without bearing the fruit of Christianity in his life, then that person would not be demonstrating evidence of regeneration. On the other hand, a person could be saved at one point, still fall into homosexuality, be convicted by the Spirit of this sin, and all the while seek to break free from it (Gal. 5:17). So technically, a person could be saved and be a homosexual, struggling against this specific sin which sometimes can get the best of him or her. It would be like a drug addict becoming a Christian and still being hooked on drugs. He would struggle against it but still possess the desire to participate in it (1 Pet. 2:11).

I would conclude that a person who has professed Christ and is struggling against sin is demonstrating evidence of regeneration. We often forget this. Before people are saved, they did not have the same inward struggle that Christians experience (“the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” - Gal. 5:17). Remember, many people who become Christians still struggle with some of their old sins. Even Paul struggled with the previous sin of legalism or self-effort (Rom. 7:19). We are not perfect (Phil. 3:13) and must remember to be gracious to others, especially when they are stuck in an old sin and while trying to get victory over it. Of course, we are never to encourage or excuse a person's sin. We must pray for them so they might experience full victory over a particular sin (Eph. 6:18).

The Bible teaches that God’s children can struggle with many kinds of different sins, but they do not live a life of total rebellion and wickedness against God and His ways without bearing fruit and transformation of living (“they which commit such things” – Rom. 1:32; “they which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” - Gal. 5:21; “he that comitteth sin is of the devil” – 1 John 3:8; “whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God - 1 John 3:10).

The idea of these Bible verses is that when a person continually and habitually practices sins of debauchery and wickedness without any change or transformation of living, then they never were born again and possessed God’s life and nature indwelling them. Struggling with sin is one thing, even the sin of homosexuality, but living in sin without God’s conviction, chastisement, and without any

transformation (signs of new life) is another thing, which gives evidence or proof that an individual never had the life of God indwelling him. This is exactly what the Bible teaches regarding alleged Christians who keep sinning without inner conviction from God for their sins, without experiencing His chastisement for their sins, and without possessing any real change in their lifestyle.

I have personally met and talked with ex-homosexuals who were saved, but who had continued to struggle with this sin. However, they have told me that they knew all along that what they were doing was wrong. They also shared with me that God would not abandon them. Today they have gotten victory over this sin and are now married and in a monogamous, heterosexual, godly relationship. God's sanctifying grace can and does change people. Sometimes it takes time, but change will come. Of course, transformation can only take place if a person is truly born again. We must remember that a person may actually be a Judas, putting on a religious front, but not be genuinely saved (John 6:64, 70-71).

To be sure, Christians can become deep seated in sin but eventually there will be signs of life and God working in their hearts to free them from their sins. They will give evidence of their salvation through fruitful living and seeking to honor God with their bodies and lives. But when there are no signs of regeneration that occur within the heart and life of a person, it's because there is no spiritual life in them ("ye have no life in you" – John 6:53). You cannot get away from what the Bible says about this. We must come face to face with the truth.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the truth of 1 John 2:19:

"They went out from us (from the ranks of true Christianity and living a Christian life), but they were not of us (they were not truly saved); for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us (identifying with true Christianity, beliefs, and living): but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (they were never part of the Christian body of believers).

In the words of Jesus, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

When someone permanently leaves the church, the truth, God's people, and God Himself, it become evident that they are not one of His children. In other words, Jesus never knew them to be one of His children.

At this point of our study, we need to answer some direct questions that are related to being a Christian while at the same time struggling with homosexuality tendencies.

3. Can a Christian who is struggling with homosexuality be judged by God and given over to uncleanness and a reprobate mind as Romans chapter one teaches?

Homosexuality is not just any sin. It is the only sin that when committed can result in God's turning people over to a lifestyle of sinful degradation, where they no longer possess any moral compass concerning their true sexual identity and depraved course of living. A special judgment is reserved for homosexuals which is the loss of their true sexual identity and the confusion that results from this judgment ("receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet" – Rom. 1:27). The Bible mentions that God gives homosexuals over to this particular sin and judgment from God.

Romans 1:24

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

Romans 1:26

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature."

Romans 1:28

"And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

A reprobate mind is a mind that is a bent or twisted in its way of thinking. It possesses a perverted attitude that rejects God and His way. It is a mind that is

unprincipled and morally abandoned, a mind disapproved and therefore disqualified from understanding or knowing the truth, a mind that is fundamentally unable to think and decide correctly about God and His will, or to comprehend and practice biblical and ethical principles.

Here is the point. God confirms people in their own choice. This can be devastating as it relates to the sin of homosexuality for a person loses their own sexual identity and orientation which is a gift given to them by God. Romans chapter one is dealing with unsaved, atheistic pagans who are engaged in idolatry (Rom. 1:19, 21) and the acts of homosexuality (Rom. 1:24, 26-27) because they have rejected God and His moral code. These people are seen to be under a threefold judgment of God. First, God judges them by removing their moral restraints, to live a life in open rebellion against God, through possessing a deprave mind (Rom. 1:18, 24, 28). Second, God takes away their sexual identity (Rom. 1:27). Third, God will judge them in hell for all eternity if they do not repent of their sins and come to faith in Christ (Rom. 1:32).

Romans 1:32 is placed within the context of unregenerate heathen people:

“Who knowing the judgment of God (innately passed down from them from creation), that they which commit such things (continually practice these types of sins in open defiance against God) are worthy of death (spiritual separation from God in hell – God’s condemnation), not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

It would seem that in Romans chapter one, when God speaks of giving people over to their vile affections (to live without moral restraints) and receive of His specific judgment of delusion (a loss one’s sexual identity), that this form of God’s wrath specifically pertains to unregenerate people. Does this mean that when an unsaved homosexual is given over to their lusts that they cannot be saved? I don’t think so. This is because the Bible says that those who practice homosexuality can be saved (1 Cor. 6:9-11 – “such were some of you”). Homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin.

Paul uses the same word (“gave up” - Greek paradidomi) in delivering the offender over to Satan with the hope of salvation and deliverance (1 Cor. 5:5). Jesus was also delivered up for us (same word) in Romans 8:32 with the prospect of paying sin’s penalty and rising from the dead. So, this word construction “gave them up” does

not connote that a person is without the hope of salvation (deliverance) and that God forever consigns them to eternal judgment.

Deffinbaugh has this interesting comment on "the wrath of God" (Rom. 1:18) and God's offer of salvation to the heathen: "God's present wrath is really a gracious gesture on God's part. It is not permanent, and it is not irreversible. When God gives men over to sin, He is not giving up on men. Giving men over to sin is God's way of encouraging men to forsake their sin and to be saved. While God's future wrath, once in force, cannot be reversed or escaped, God's present wrath can be reversed, and men can escape. The reason for this is that God has already poured out His 'future wrath' on Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel. God's anger toward sin has been satisfied in Christ because His wrath was poured out on Him, at Calvary."

This is Biblically true. People can be saved out of terrible sins and seemingly hopeless situations. However, there comes a time when a person can become "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19). Since God's grace does not force itself on anyone (John 5:40), people can become hardened to truth and the Gospel message to such an extent that they confirm themselves in their own choice and ways, which means they can no longer be influenced by God's grace (2 Pet. 2:3). Of course, no one but God really knows when a person reaches this state of mind and heart and when God's patience runs out (Gen. 6:3).

"There is a time, we know not when;
There is a place, we know not where
That seals the destiny of men
For glory or despair."

Here is the main question we are dealing with in this section of our study. Can a genuine Christian, who might struggle with and engage in homosexual lust and activity, experience God's judicial sentence of judgment (Rom. 1:18, 27)? In other words, can they be turned over to living in homosexuality with no longer possessing any moral restraints and end up losing their true sexual identity? If a person is a genuine Christian, it would seem that they cannot come under this specific aspect of God's judgment as outlined in Romans chapter one, since it is reserved for unbelievers. However, we must remember that Christians can become *deceived* by

sin (Heb. 3:13), *blind* to the truth and follow their own sinful path and lusts. This is the result of the old nature and the temptation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7; 6:9).

2 Peter 1:9 is addressing Christians and states:

“But he that lacketh these things (Christians virtues) is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

Revelation 3:17

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Jesus was speaking to Christians who needed to repent (Rev. 3:19). With this in mind, it would seem that Christians who struggle with the degrading sexual practice of homosexuality can in some sense and for some time become blind to spiritual truth and realities, and as a result of the deception of sin, they commit themselves to living in a state of rebellion against God (Heb. 3:10-13). However, if they are true believers in Christ, this type of rebellion will eventually be dealt with by God through conviction and chastisement (Heb. 12:6), repentance will occur, and restoration will come about, or else they are not genuine believers (1 John 3:10).

Again, the Christians that I have met, who engaged in homosexual activity, have told me that they knew what they were doing was wrong, but they did it anyway. How did they know they were wrong? It's because genuine believers have the Holy Spirit residing in them (Rom. 8:9). God may allow a Christian to be committed to a sinful practice for a time, who become influenced by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13), but He will not abandon them to a life of sinful degradation and judgment like unsaved people (“for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” - Heb. 13:5).

4. How should a Christian deal with a person who claims to be saved but is practicing homosexuality?

Homosexuality is a sin and Christians are not to support sinful behavior. The Bible gives a clear answer on how to deal with a person who claims to be a brother or

sister and who is practicing homosexuality. However, it is the application of what Scripture teaches that can become difficult to enforce, due to close family, relatives, and church friends who might become engaged in sexual sins, such as homosexuality. And yet, the Bible gives us a guideline to follow that will help take a Biblical approach to sinful brothers and sisters who are engaging in certain deviant, sinful practices.

1 Corinthians 5:11 instructs us:

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no (not even) not to eat.”

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, but they reveal the character of certain types of sins, including homosexuality, which are a cause to practice Bible separation. In this case, a man was living in open sin with his stepmother (1 Cor. 5:1). A person may conclude that he is truly saved and a brother in Christ, even while engaging in this type of sin (incest), or perhaps it could be another sin like homosexuality. What should a Bible-believing Christian do? The apostolic command (not advice) is to separate from them in such a way that it cannot be conceived that you are condoning their sinful lifestyle but expressing your utter rejection of it. One example is given; howbeit, an important one. The example of sharing a meal with a homosexual brother should not be practiced. Sharing a meal creates a special bond of fellowship and communion with a sinner that might contribute to endorsing his friendship and personal sin.

The expression “no” (not even) would be quite out of place, if Paul were only thinking of the Lord’s Supper which was observed in the local assembly. He is definitely thinking of social meals and is saying, “Do not even invite him to your house or accept his invitations.” This may seem rather harsh, but the purpose is to demonstrate to a brother that you will not condone his life of sin in any way. This is referring to someone who is openly and defiantly practicing homosexuality. They are free in their expression of it and are not seeking repentance and reconciliation to God. This is the type of person that has committed his life to drunkenness, sexual sin, or some other deviant, sinful practice. It’s this type of Christian that we are to discipline, not fellowship with, and separate from.

William MacDonald gives a good summary of this apostolic teaching, providing an all-encompassing answer to this practice of separation. He writes: “Does the Apostle Paul mean that we are not even to eat with such a Christian who engages in these practices? That is exactly what the verse teaches! We are not to eat with him at the Lord’s Supper, nor are we to enjoy a social meal with him. There may be exceptional cases. A Christian wife, for instance, would still be obligated to eat with her husband who had been disfellowshipped. But the general rule is that professing believers who are guilty of the sins listed should be subjected to social ostracism in order to impress on them the enormity of their transgression and to bring them to repentance.

“If it is objected that the Lord ate with publicans and sinners (Matt. 11:19; Mark 2:5), we would point out that these men did not profess to be His followers, and in eating with them He did not recognize them as His disciples. What this passage teaches is that we should not fellowship with Christians who are living wicked lives.”

I cannot improve on this answer. It is well-stated and Scriptural. It’s our job to follow what God teaches us here. We might try and read between the lines and make up our own mind and story, but God’s Word is clear on this matter. We should not make a point to promote intimate fellowship (“even eating”) with those who are engaging in open, sexual rebellion against God.

5. How can we demonstrate concern for a professing Christian who is engaging in homosexual activity?

We have seen that Scripture talks about not eating or fellowshiping with a brother or sister, who is openly and defiantly practicing sexual sins, such as homosexuality. This can become a very difficult command to obey, especially if someone is close to us, part of our church ministry, or kin. And yet, we must know that Scripture gives us the best advice to follow. God’s advice is better than any other advice we might receive. Actually, disassociating ourselves from a brother or sister who is practicing sexual sins, such as homosexuality, is an expression of love. This is because love rejoices in the truth and not iniquity (1 Cor. 13:6).

Actually, we express our love to a brother or sister by not allowing them to think that we approve or condone their sexual sins in any way. If we bypass their sin and seek fellowship with them, we are not communicating the true nature of love, which is to represent truth, godliness, and holiness before them.

But how can we remain in contact with a brother or sister who has fallen into sexual sin so we can at least verbally express our love and concern for them? Each person will need to figure out specific and unique ways they can remain in contact with professing brothers or sisters who may be practicing a homosexual lifestyle. A Christian can remain in contact with them through emails, inviting them over to their home to at least talk with them about their relationship with the Lord, express their love for that person, take time to prayer with them, and remind them that you are ready to help restore them to the Lord in a spirit of love.

Galatians 6:1 says:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”

Separating from a brother or sister does not mean we never attempt to restore a brother or sister to the place of purity and fellowship with God. In order to restore them, we need to remain in contact with them.

James 5:19-20

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him. Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner (*a Christian brother who has sinned*) from the error of his way shall save a soul from death (*premature physical death due to God’s chastening hand*), and shall hide a multitude of sins” (*by forgiving them and seeking their restoration instead of exploiting them*).

The context of James chapter five refers to a fallen brother who has been disciplined by the church but who now wants restoration. This person is a sheep (one of God’s children) who has wandered far from the fold. The elders were ready to meet with him and restore him to the fellowship of the church. In doing so, these caring elders would save this brother from what might otherwise result in a sin that leads to physical death by experiencing the chastisement of God. They would also cover a

multitude of sins. This is true when God forgives our sins and it's also true when Christians forgive the sins of others. This covering of sins can have the sense of expressing forgiveness and acceptance to others within the body of Christ which is the opposite of flagrant gossiping and character assassination. Also, by having this brother restored to the Lord and the local church, his sins would no longer be visible and open to the unsaved world of sinners and mockers of Christianity.

Restoration is an important ministry. In restoring "saved sinners" (God's sheep) we need to in some way *reach out to them* without violating the command to *separate* from them, so as not to approve of their wrongdoing. James is obviously referring to God chastening a wayward believer to the point of physical death (Heb. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 11:29-31). Sometimes we need to save the saved! We need to save those who are Christians from experiencing God's premature judgment upon their lives, due to their own stubbornness to live under sin's power and who are defaming Christ and His name. In order to save them, we must remain in contact with them.

The whole context of James chapter 5 is talking about the revival and restoration of a believer – not the redemption of the lost or the evangelism of the unsaved. This leads us to an important question. How do we restore fallen brothers and sisters?

- We confront them (James 5:14).
- We pray for them (James 5:14, 15, 16, 17, 18).
- We deliver them (James 5:19-20).

All of this means that it is necessary to have some social contact with a person, even while we are following the Biblical mandate of separation. We must *separate* from them to let them know and understand we are not approving of their wayward lifestyle, while at the same time, we must *connect* with them to express our love, concern, and desire to see them restored in their Christian walk with God. Contact, care, and concern are important words that we should remember when dealing with brothers and sisters who are living in sinful rebellion against God. Although we must separate from them, not condoning and catering to their lifestyle in any way or fashion, we cannot isolate ourselves from them. They need a continued witness of light.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 gives us another example of separation from an erring brother and believer: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 adds:

“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.”

In this case, a brother was not providing for his family. He was lazy, not working, and meddling in the affairs of others (2 Thess. 3:11-12). This too was cause for separation. It should be noted at this point that not every sin that a Christian commits is worthy of practicing family separation (separation from erring saints). If this were the case, we would never have church! However, this is the type of sin that a brother or sister persists in (does not confess) and a sin that effects his own personal family and the testimony of the local church. It is the type of sin that is worthy of separation, as it pertains to the apostolic command (1 Cor. 5:11), and which defames the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 5:8). Here is the point. When a person is a Christian and has become committed to a life of debauchery, drunkenness, sexual sin, or some other deviant, sinful practice, then we must invoke discipline and separate from them.

The expressions “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” and “note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” are clear commands to practice separation, which means to not promote fellowship and communion with this sinning brother. However, when we are absolutely sure that he has had a genuine conversion experience, we should still “count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” The word “admonish” means to instruct, provide reproof and correction, and warning to this brother. This would necessitate some form of communication or contact with the erring brother - not the total ostracizing of a brother. Once again, there must be a certain amount of contact, caring, and concern we are to manifest toward a sinful brother, which is absolutely necessary, even as we practice the Biblical stance of separating from him, which involves denying our close fellowship and endorsement of his sinful ways.

This reminds us that we must “keep the door open” to be able to restore a fallen brother. Although we cannot fellowship with this sinning brother in the local church or promote true Christian fellowship with him outside the church, we must not totally ostracize ourselves from him. Again, there needs to be some contact, communication, reaching out, conversation, and assistance in the restoration and sanctifying process (2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1). We need to remember this as we practice Biblical separation from disorderly brethren who have committed offences worthy of separation. We should close the door where necessary and when it is needed, according to the Biblical mandates, but at the same time we must keep the door open in other areas, to seek restoration of a fallen brother.

We must also remember that certain types of sins call for greater separation than others. Sexual sins and other sins committed by brothers and sisters, which are mentioned in various lists presented in Scripture (1 Cor. 5:11, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21), are grounds for separation, not only on a church level, but also in everyday living. Other sins, such as the promotion of worldly music in a church setting, carnal worship, and a neglect in Bible teaching and preaching, may be cause for separation on a church level (refusing to attend a certain church), without disregarding fellowship from the brethren on a personal level. In other words, we cannot condone doctrinal compromise and impurity on a church level, while at the same time, we can have some form of fellowship with brethren, whom we might disagree with on certain doctrinal and sanctification points.

For example, I might play a game of tennis and fellowship with a brother outside the church, who may not be as separated as myself in various areas, but refuse to fellowship with him on a local church level where I must endorse his belief system or cooperate with such things as his ecumenicalism or contemporary music. At this point, I follow the command to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). I might take this brother out to eat knowing that he truly does love the Lord and have opportunity to speak to him about doctrinal issues and greater dedication to the Lord’s holy will (sanctification). The same would be true about fellowshiping with family members who may be charismatic in their beliefs and somewhat liberal and compromising in their church affiliations. I might be able to fellowship with them in certain aspects of social life (work, family gatherings, picnics) since they are not committing immoral sins.

However, I will have to withdraw fellowship from them in relation to church ministry and affiliation, so I do not compromise with anything that goes against my own personal stand and testimony for Christ.

A brother who is living in open, sexual sin (like homosexuality) or who is a known drunkard and adulterer is a different situation. I could not even eat with this brother outside the church assembly, due to his open and flagrant sin and the severity of his sin. 1 Corinthians 5:11 makes this very clear (“not to keep company” and “not to eat”). Different types of offences are treated differently. How far to remove ourselves from an offender varies according to the severity of the sin. Each case must be decided on its own merits. There is a place to stop and a place to start. We must search for a frame of reference and seek to apply these Scriptures to our ministries and fellowships or else we will condone sin and become polluted with compromise and sin on every level.

We should ask ourselves these important questions. What worldly sin is a brother committing or promoting in his life? Must I separate from him on a church level? Must I separate from him on a social level? To what extent must I separate from him on a social level? Is this a matter of *personal* (individual) separation from the world (1 John 2:15-17; James 1:27), *ecclesiastical* (church) separation from apostasy (2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 Cor. 10:20), or *family* separation from erring brethren who are part of the family of God (1 Cor. 5:11, 13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14)? Practicing Biblical separation is sometimes hard (“put away from among yourselves that wicked person” – 1 Cor. 5:13) but it is necessary to keep our personal life and our church pure. It is also necessary to bring conviction upon the wayward sinning brother, so in the end he might repent and once again bring forth what the Bible calls “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 21:11).

6. Should a Christian attend a homosexual wedding?

Eating with a homosexual or homosexual couples (1 Cor. 5:11), or attending weddings of homosexual couples, seems to be a clear violation of the separation (no fellowship and endorsement) command. Whether or not Christians should attend homosexual weddings is a sensitive topic. However, a Christian should not attend such a wedding since it would reveal support and approval of something that

is against God's plan for heterosexual marriage (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). As a Christian, I must stand firm and accurately represent God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). A Christian cannot glorify who God if he is attending and endorsing a homosexual marriage. Sometimes, taking a stand means to reject ungodliness even if it means being ridiculed (1 Peter 3:14).

7. If we invite homosexual friends to family events is this approving of homosexuality?

This is a difficult issue to answer because we cannot address all circumstances in which homosexual people could or could not be invited to family events. So, all I can do is speak in generalities at this point. However, if family events mean eating together (which they normally do) and enjoying one another's company and fellowship, then this would seem to be a violation of what we have studied in the above Biblical texts.

Let's take a look at a different scenario. Let's say we have a family member who is an atheist, and we want to invite him or her over for a birthday party. Does this mean that you are approving of the person's atheism? Of course not. However, the scenario is different between an unsaved atheist and *professing Christian* involved in homosexuality. Paul the apostle stated, while recording the inspired Word of God, that we should not judge the unsaved as we do our own spiritual brothers and sisters.

1 Corinthians 5:9-10

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators (*in the sense that we promote and condone their sin – 2 Cor. 6:14-17*): Yet not altogether (*we must still evangelize them and not live a life of monasticism!*) with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."

Paul is addressing unsaved people in these verses and reminds us that we must remain open to witnessing and reaching the lost. We cannot lock them out of our lives completely and live like a monk in some monastery in Timbuktu. We would have to take a rocket and leave this earth to not interact with lost people. Paul is clarifying

what He meant in a previous letter sent to the Corinthians. Paul did not intend to say that we are not to have any association with vile and sinful men. This certainly is not the case. We cannot reach them without meeting them and witnessing to them (Mark 16:15). As long as we are “in” the world it will be necessary to rub shoulders with lost sinners and we can do this without becoming “of” the world (1 John 2:15-17).

Here is the point. We cannot and should not practice the same type of separation from unbelievers that we would with God’s saints who are engaging in open, sexual sins. 1 Corinthians 5:11 again reminds us: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

Back to our birthday party scenario. There is a definite difference between inviting an atheist over for a birthday party and a brother that is engaging in open rebellion against God, by committing the sin of homosexuality. The atheist is unsaved, and a different command applies to separating from him, while the brother is saved, and a different command applies to separating from him. We must evaluate each situation from a Biblical perspective.

Now, what if there was a member of your family who was a homosexual, and he wanted to invite his "partner" to come along with him to your birthday party? Would that be okay? This can be a bit stickier. First, if they are both unsaved, it could possibly be a Gospel outreach to them. Second, if one person is saved in the relationship, while the other is not, then you most likely must confer with Paul’s command to not promote the brother’s sinful relationship with the unsaved partner. Third, if the party is for a very young child, we should not approve of such an invitation (even if both partners are unsaved).

Why? It’s because we should not want to present a bad witness to the children who might be present. Furthermore, their parents might not approve. If, however, it was a birthday party for only adults, then it might be okay for a Christian to invite the homosexuals (two unsaved partners) remembering that Jesus was a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34). Here is a word of caution. I would make known to my

hypothetical homosexual relative before he arrives, that no overt homosexual activity is to be allowed in the home. This would be the condition. If he did not like my condition, he would not be invited. After all, I am free to determine what occurs in my home.

We need to make sure that we never approve of homosexual behavior, but we want to provide an opportunity to witness to unsaved homosexuals and show them the love of Christ. How this could work out in every situation cannot be determined with one short and simple answer. But we should try the best we can to present both moral rightness and love to those who are lost. At the same time, we must obey the Bible's clear teaching on separating from a brother who is openly engaging in sexual sins, such as homosexuality (1 Cor. 5:9-10). We should not promote fellowship with him to accommodate and endorse his life of sinful degradation. This means we should not invite him to the birthday party.

Again, how can we remain in contact with a brother who might be engaged in sexual misconduct, while being obedient to God's separation command? Leaving our feelings out of it, and based upon what we have learned from Scripture, here are some examples.

- Send a birthday card or gift to him.
- Send emails to him.
- Send phone texts and make cell phone calls.
- Express your commitment of love and concern for him.
- Remind him of what is right and godly.
- Seek to restore him.
- Don't give money to him.
- Don't eat with him.
- Don't attend his homosexual wedding.
- Don't be afraid to mention his sin.
- Pray for him and with him.
- Share good memories with him, related to the time when he walked with God, and sought to do what was right and glorify God.
- Meet with him to express your love to him.
- Meet with him to keep the basic lines of communication open.

It should be observed that there is a difference between fellowshiping with a sinning brother and reaching out to a wayward brother in loving concern and compassion. There is a difference between seeking fellowship with a sinful brother and seeking to restore him to a spiritual walk with God.

Romans 12:18 says:

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

The Bible tells us to be at peace with all men (including brothers or sisters who might be struggling with homosexuality). There are those who claim to be Christians who advocate hatred and violence towards homosexuals. This certainly is not condoned by God in the New Testament epistles (Rom. 12:19). We are not under law but grace (Rom. 6:14).

Of course, this is not peace at any price, attempting to condone a sinner’s sin and override God’s clear command to separate from a brother who is involved in some heinous sin that defames Christ. However, we must always seek to maintain a peaceful relationship with a sinning brother or sister who has strayed from the Lord. Why? It’s because we need to reach out to them in the spirit of restoration (Gal. 6:1; James 5:20) and always let them know that we are available to help get them back on the right path.

When a brother recognizes his affliction with sin and begins to take steps to correct his way (James 5:13-14), it’s then we must really come to his aid, begin to fellowship with him, and let him know that if he wants to rid his life of some specific sexual sin, that he will have our full support and help. However, until he comes to this point, we must not do anything to relay the message that we are accepting, endorsing, or promoting his sinful life.

Great wisdom is needed in dealing with saints who sin and who need restoration. The Bible says we are to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). But we should not disobey the clear wisdom that God gives to us in His Word, as it relates to separating from sinning brothers or sisters, while at the same time reaching out to them to restore them in a spirit of Christlike love, meekness, and compassion. We are always to be meek and loving as Jesus was in dealing with sinners (Matt. 11:28-30). While

speaking with fallen sinners we must confront their sin while at the same time show compassion toward them. This is what Jesus did with the woman at the well (John 4:4-19). He reminded her of the sin in her life but offered the remedy for it.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 reminds us of the importance of possessing compassion and patience with people who are overtaken by sin and Satan: “**And the servant of the Lord must not strive** (*be contentious, argumentative*); **but be gentle** (*mild, approachable - not irritable and harsh*) unto **all men, apt to teach** (*instructing people with the truth*), **patient** (*not becoming angry, losing our temper*). **In meekness** (*without pride or an air of superiority*) **instructing** (*train, correct, discipline*) **those that oppose themselves** (*wrong their own soul and life by refusing to bow to the Word of God*); **if God peradventure** (*perhaps they might change – but it may be difficult due to their own stubbornness and contradiction of the truth*) **will give them repentance** (*God’s sovereign, inner work taking place in their hearts*) **to the acknowledging of the truth** (*when a person says “I was wrong and want to change”*).

“**And that they may recover** (*come to their spiritual senses – be sober*) **themselves** (*personal responsibility and freedom of choice*) **out of the snare** (*trap or trick*) **of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will** (*by numbing their conscience, confusing their senses, and paralyzing their will*).”

If we learn to deal with people in gentleness and meekness, while giving them the truth, we will find ourselves having greater opportunity to reach out to them.

Colossians 4:6

“Let your speech *be* always with grace (*kindness*), seasoned with salt (*preserving the truth*), that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

“Lord, help us not respond in kind
To those who hate and turn from You;
Instead, help us to love and pray
That someday they’ll accept what’s true.”

You never know what God will do in the hearts of those who need to be saved or Christians that need to be revived. Let us mimic the Master and befriend sinners without compromising with sinners or condoning their actions (Heb. 7:26). One thing is certain, God in His grace can salvage the lives of people through the Christlike ministry of His servants.

“Make me a servant
Humble and meek
Lord let me lift up those who are weak.
And may the prayers of my heart always be
Make me a servant today.”